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# Conceptualizing the Unspeakable: A Conceptual Metaphor Theory Analysis of Sexual Assault Trauma in Creative Nonfiction

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Conceptualizing the Unspeakable: A Conceptual Metaphor Theory Analysis of Sexual Assault  
Trauma in Creative Nonfiction

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the  
Department of English  
West Chester University  
West Chester, Pennsylvania

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of  
Master of Arts

By

Ariana Ciamaricone

May 2020

## Dedication Page

I would like to dedicate my master's thesis to my parents who have supported me throughout my education. I would not have been able to make it this far without them, and I dedicate this culmination of my graduate degree to them. They deserve this and so much more.

## Acknowledgements

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## Abstract

This paper explores the use of conceptual metaphors (CMs) in two works of creative nonfiction, namely Laurie Halse Anderson's (2019) *Shout* and Elissa Washuta's (2014) *My Body is a Book of Rules*. Anderson's (2019) poetic memoir centers on her experiences with sexual assault throughout her childhood and the process of writing her young adult novel *Speak* (1999).

Washuta (2014) writes on her experiences with rape and mental illness via prose. Both memoirs detail their authors' reckoning with the experience of sexual assault, and this paper investigates how trauma narratives attempt to "resolve what cannot be resolved, to generate meaning, knowledge, and justice in the context of trauma" (Jensen, 2019, p. 6)

CMs typically structure our understanding of an abstract concept in terms of more familiar and concrete knowledge, including embodied experiences. The paper explores how CMs and the genre of creative nonfiction work together to access readings of sexual assault trauma. CMs including DESIRE IS HUNTING, A LUSTFUL PERSON IS AN ACTIVATED MACHINE, and CONTROL IS UP help the authors and readers alike conceptualize the experiences and their aftermath. The discussion concludes with an evaluation of the view of rape in America, as it pertains to the cultural understanding of the severity of the crime.

*Keywords: sexual assault, rape, conceptual metaphor, creative nonfiction, trauma*

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# **Conceptualizing the Unspeakable: A Conceptual Metaphor Theory Analysis of Sexual Assault Trauma in Creative Nonfiction**

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

Trauma can manifest in different ways depending on one's psychological makeup, cultural background, and the nature of the traumatic event. Accounts of trauma date back as early as 2000 BC, when Egyptians wrote of soldiers experiencing sudden blindness while in battle, which could not be attributed to any physical cause (Jensen, 2019). Centuries later, Jean Martin Charcot is credited with the first recorded breakthrough in both understanding and treating trauma. He was the first to understand that symptoms of trauma originated from psychological issues, usually as a result of horrific and/or violent experiences (Jensen, 2019). Sigmund Freud also concluded that these symptoms were based in psychological trauma, but he believed that the trauma arose from socially unacceptable, and therefore repressed, desires. Freud believed that patients needed to talk through their experiences in order to heal from their trauma. As time passed, Freud's approach to trauma would become the most well-known and well-practiced, as it was used to treat World War I and World War II soldiers.

After World War I, a former patient of Freud, Abram Kardiner, argued that traumatic symptoms were not a sign of weakness and that they were in fact a normal reaction to pain and atrocity (Jensen, 2019). Soldiers suffering from traumatic experiences were deemed "survivors," a term that is still used to this day (Jensen, 2019, p. 10). Decades later, soldiers suffering from battle-related trauma would be diagnosed with "Shell Shock," and eventually Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). On a physiological note, PTSD constitutes a structural remodeling of the lateral, prefrontal, parietal, and posterior midline structures due to traumatic stress experiences (Jensen, 2019). When this occurs, the symptoms can be active symptoms, such as



hyper alertness, exaggerated anxiety flashbacks, or sleeplessness (Jensen, 2019). Symptoms can also be classified as de-activating, which would include a fragmented memory, shame, doubt, guilt, a diminished sense of self, alienation, and more (Vickroy, 2014). Traumatic responses may also destroy one's belief in his or her own safety or view of oneself as decent, strong, and autonomous (Vickroy, 2014). A patient does not have to have all of these symptoms to be diagnosed with PTSD, and their symptoms can range between both types.

Based on the aforementioned evolution of trauma and trauma disorders, literary trauma theory has become a major area of focus for literary scholars. Literary trauma theory focuses on the motivation behind trauma narratives and what trauma within literature does for its readers, the authors, and the communities associated with this trauma. Jensen (2019) describes these narratives as “produced in the interrogative space between a haunted present and an unattainable future and concern the interplay between what can be known and remembered, and those sounds, images, and feelings trapped in the decontextualized echo chamber of traumatic memory” (p. 8). Jensen's description of trauma narrative as somewhere between the facts, or “what can be known,” and what was physically experienced reinforces the notion that trauma narratives are meant to resolve that which is unresolved within one's self. By recalling these traumatic events, the authors can begin a search for justice, recognition, and meaning that may finally lead to acceptance and healing. Much like Freud's notion of discussing trauma in order to heal one's self, trauma autobiographies allow the writers to find healing by expressing their suffering through written language.

Literary trauma theory attempts to overcome the constraints of fragmented memories by asserting that trauma is an unrepresentable event (Balaev, 2014). By describing trauma as such, theorists eliminate the issues with memory and credibility, as these reinforce the sense that

trauma cannot be known or expressed in one, universal way. This theoretical trend was introduced by a leader in the field of literary trauma theory, Cathy Caruth, who pioneered a psychoanalytic, poststructural approach that theorizes trauma as an unsolvable problem of the unconscious. This issue within the unconscious serves to highlight the inherent contradictions between language and experience (Balaev, 2014). Caruth believes that trauma cannot be represented through speech or written expression, as these experiences are beyond words. This view is considered to be the classic model of literary trauma theory, blending linguistic analysis with Freudian notions of repression and catharsis to illustrate that trauma is not experienced in any one particular way and can therefore never be fully expressed through language. Modern versions of literary trauma theory also believe in the inability to fully represent trauma through language, but they typically take a more pluralistic approach, using multiple linguistic and literary theories together to understand the failings of language (Balaev, 2014). Typically, these theories analyze language's inability to convey experience.

Despite literary trauma theory's argument regarding the unrepresentability of trauma, literary genres including creative nonfiction have provided a space for survivors to articulate their experiences. Nonfiction in itself does more than simply tell the "truth." Nonfiction is typically used when what needs to be said can ultimately benefit from nonfiction's immediacy and intimacy between author and reader. Creative nonfiction should tell a story with actions and sensory details (Madden, 2013). Yet, Dave Madden (2013) admits that limiting creative nonfiction strictly to a narrative mode may not encompass all that creative nonfiction entails. In fact, he (2013) believes that *creative* is not a genre but a qualifier that can be applied to anything that forms something new in the mind of its reader. This definition is what allows for nonfiction to have creative elements within it, as can be seen in the texts highlighted through this study.

Brenda Miller (2013) agrees with Madden's (2013) view of creativity in creative nonfiction. She views the authors that focus on the smaller details and wording as vulnerable and brave, as they allow their experiences to flow more organically through their pieces. She (2013) argues that confessional writing does not always provide the best method for conveying one's trauma, as the text functions for more than the author's catharsis. Readers alike will be indulging in these pieces, and authors have to convey their experiences to readers through metaphor and other alternative methods of providing insight into their experiences. The reliance on facts alone to convey the truth of an experience limits the accessibility of said experience. The more courageous writer is the one who cares more about words and significant details, than about the feelings or experiences that they initiated from. As nonfiction has evolved, writers have started to realize, "artifact owes a debt to experience, but that experience itself no longer has the upper hand" (Miller, 2013, p. 109).

For this study, I am using cognitive poetics to analyze trauma narratives for potential similarities in conceptualizing trauma. In particular, I am using Conceptual Metaphor Theory, which is a theoretical framework of cognitive poetics that focuses on how metaphor is embodied in one's experiences and cognition. Using this framework, I am analyzing how language may indirectly provide access to conceptualizing trauma through creative nonfiction, as creative nonfiction provides more opportunities for readers to access traumatic experiences.

## **Chapter Two: Methodology**

In order to better understand how trauma is conceptualized and conveyed in creative nonfiction, I will be using Conceptual Metaphor Theory from the larger theoretical basis of cognitive poetics. Cognitive poetics originates from cognitive linguistics and cognitive psychology, as it merges science and literature in order to understand how people read literary texts (Stockwell, 2002). Stockwell (2002) describes the motivation behind the cognitive poetic enterprise as follows: “The object of investigation...is not the artifice of the literary text alone, or the reader alone, but the more natural process of reading when one is engaged with the other” (p. 2). The fundamental underpinnings of cognitive poetics are its basis in embodiment and its view of the meaning-making process. The notion of embodiment and the interaction between literary criticism and cognitive poetics provide a space to interpret a universal reading of texts and form an understanding of how texts shape societies and vice versa. It is through this space that I am attempting to subvert literary trauma theory in order to find the commonalities in reading trauma.

Cognitive linguistics and cognitive psychology form a foundation that asserts that our minds are literally and figuratively embodied. This belief contradicts a widely known assertion that mind and body are two separate entities, which was most famously expressed by Rene Descartes. Embodiment affects every part of language in that all of our experiences, knowledge, beliefs and wishes are connected to and expressible only through patterns of language that have their roots in our material experience (Stockwell, 2002). Based on this connection between experience and language, cognitive poetics is able to “offer a unified explanation of both individual interpretations as well as interpretations that are shared by a group, community or culture” (Stockwell, 2002, p. 5). This unity serves as an advantage to using cognitive poetics theories.

Part of the challenge of using these theories comes from literary criticism and cognitive poetics' different views on the reading process. Jeroen Vandaele and Geert Brone (2009) describe the merging of literary criticism's subjectivity and cognitive science's empiricism as "cognitive poetics may be a valuable attempt to reconcile [cognitive science's] hard empiricism with [literary criticism's] soft mental life by relating literary meaning production to principles of meaning construction in fields that are easier to monitor [i.e. cognitive poetics]" (p. 6). The meaning production process is what helps to bridge the gap between literary criticism and cognitive poetics. As mentioned above, the differences in interpretations and readings plays an important role in the meaning-making process. According to Stockwell (2002), interpretation is what readers do as soon as, if not before, they begin to read a text. Some of these initial interpretations may be downright wrong, and they are subject to change. Unlike interpretations, readings are the process of gaining a sense of the text that is personally acceptable (Stockwell, 2002). Cognitive poetics helps to shape interpretations into readings as it "models the process by which intuitive interpretations are formed into expressible meanings, and it presents that same framework as a means of describing and accounting for those readings" (Stockwell, 2002, p. 8). Based on the innate subjectivity of these interpretations and readings, there is room for disagreements about literary texts and their subsequent meaning. Literary criticism tends to focus on the disagreements between readers as an area of study; however, cognitive poetics chooses to account for such disagreements as a matter of diverse cultural, experiential, and textual constraints around real readers reading literature in the real world (Stockwell, 2002). Essentially, differences in readings can be accounted for through reader variation rather than seen as a pocket for research. In accounting for differences through reader variation, cognitive poetics allows for

specific interpretations based on cultural understandings, which provides a space for readings of sexual assault accounts based on societal standards and common views of criminality.

The notions of embodiment and cultural readings are highlighted in Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, 2003). CMT argues that metaphors are as much a part of ordinary thought as they are a special feature of language (Gibbs Jr., 2017, 2019). Thus, metaphors are considered to be a part of cognition and the basis of language rather than a special rhetorical feature. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson introduced this theory with their seminal text *Metaphors We Live By* (1980, 2003). The foundation of this theory lies in the idea that metaphor influences a person's "conceptual system" (thought processes), as shown through a person's language, actions, and understanding (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, 2003, p. 6). Lakoff and Johnson use the example of ARGUMENT IS WAR to illustrate that not only do humans organize their speech in terms of war when it comes to arguments, but they also structure their actions based on this metaphorical concept. For instance, people can win or lose arguments. They often see the person that they are arguing against as an opponent. They attack their positions and they defend their own. Many of the things people *do* in arguing are partially structured by the concept of war (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, 2003). The fact that humans speak about arguments in terms of war only partially shows the underlying conceptual metaphor, as it influences not just a person's actions or speech. The conceptual metaphor is embedded in the very concept of an argument (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, 2003). That being said, the metaphor behind ARGUMENT IS WAR only works because the culture surrounding it has "a discourse form structured in terms of battle," but this does not have to be the case in other cultures (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, 2003, p. 5). Therefore, this conceptual metaphor may change based on a person's culture.

In order to better understand conceptual metaphors, one must first understand how the process of metaphorical concepts works. Raymond Gibbs (2017, 2019) breaks down the elements of a conceptual metaphor, using LIFE IS A JOURNEY as an example. Expressions that use this conceptual metaphor are, “I’ve come a long way,” “I’ve got a long way to go,” “This is my life’s path,” etc. For these examples, LIFE becomes the target domain, and JOURNEY becomes the source domain. Gibbs Jr. (2017, 2019) explains that while LIFE and JOURNEY do not share the same features, the experiences of a JOURNEY are mapped onto the idea of LIFE, which creates the underpinnings of the conceptual metaphor. During this mapping process, some aspects of the target domain are highlighted, while other aspects are hidden. For instance, time’s effect on life is highlighted, but the physiological aspects of life are not. While this may seem like a disadvantage to using this theory, it is important to keep in mind that many abstract concepts can be structured by multiple conceptual metaphors, allowing both the source and the target domains to be fully realized (Gibbs Jr., 2017, 2019). Many of these mappings rely on people’s physical or bodily experiences, more specifically their image-schemas. Gibbs Jr. (2017, 2019) describes image schemas as “dynamic analog representations of spatial relations and movements in space...[that] have internal logic or structure [which] determines their roles in structuring various abstract concepts and patterns of reasoning” (p. 23). Essentially, these are ways that human’s categorize physical experiences and actions in order to then map those experiences onto abstract concepts. For instance, the conceptual metaphor of CONTROL IS UP is based on one’s physical experiences of UP and DOWN. The abstract concept of CONTROL is mapped onto these directional experiences. This notion of image schema emphasizes the theory’s basis in embodiment, as a person’s experiences affect their language and their understanding of the world.

Based on the notions of mapping and embodiment, there are different types of metaphorical concepts that arise due to the experiences that are being mapped. Firstly, structural metaphors account for concepts that are metaphorically structured in terms of another (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003). For instance, the conceptual metaphor of ARGUMENT IS WAR is a structural metaphor because the target domain, ARGUMENT, is directly mapped onto the concept of war. Unlike these metaphors, orientational metaphors organize “a whole system of concepts with respect to one another” (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003, p. 14). Most orientational metaphors are concerned with spatial orientation, which come from our physical and cultural experiences. For instance, the aforementioned conceptual metaphor of CONTROL IS UP is an orientational metaphor. The source, CONTROL, is mapped on the spatial orientation of UP. Dissimilar to the previous two, the final type of conceptual metaphors are ontological metaphors. When spatial orientations fail, humans tend to implement artificial boundaries in order to, “make physical phenomena discrete” (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003, p. 25). Ontological metaphors would be used for more abstract nouns like inflation. They also are used for very limited purposes: referring, quantifying, identifying aspects, identifying causes, and setting goals and motivating actions (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003). Although their uses are limited, ontological metaphors account for a sizeable portion of the metaphorical concepts used on an everyday basis.

Conceptual Metaphor Theory proves to be the most effective theoretical approach for this study due its focus on embodiment and the meaning-making processes behind reading. While some scholars are skeptical of CMT’s abilities to offer a satisfactory theory of meaning and cultural models, this theory reflects the multiplicity of metaphor through analyzing its numerous forms and various cultural foundations. Similar to metaphors, trauma can be presented in multiple forms and heavily based on one’s society, making CMT an effective approach to



analyzing trauma in language. Given that trauma can be an elusive subject within written language, it is important to utilize a methodology that accounts both for individual experiences and cultural perspectives and for the potential for a collective understanding of a text.

Conceptual Metaphor Theory also allows for several conceptual metaphors to cover the expanse of a target domain, allowing trauma to be captured within language and thought. For example, Karin Rechsteiner, Vashal Tol, and Andreas Maercker used CMT to explain how trauma is conceptualized in India. For this study, they used the following premise as their basis for using CMT: “Given the culture-sensitive nature of metaphor conceptualization, metaphor analysis presents a method with high potential to provide insight into how traumata are perceived and verbally expressed in non-Western cultures” (Rechsteiner et. al., 2019, p. 1). This premise came from Maercker, Heim, and Kirmayer’s earlier (2018) findings that due to metaphor’s ability to transmit and reflect fundamental concepts and values embedded in one’s culture, cultural attributes related to trauma can be reflected in culture-specific expressions. Essentially, the researchers believed that Conceptual Metaphor Theory provided an opportunity to understand trauma despite differences in cultures. While this particular study focused on non-western, non-English speaking participants, the fundamental beliefs apply to a more general understanding that metaphor analysis allows for more insight into trauma than other potential methodologies.

The trauma explored within this paper will be that of sexual assault and sexual violence against women. For the purpose of this paper, the crime of sexual assault is only viewed within the power dynamics of men assaulting women. While sexual assault does not discriminate against gender or sexuality, this paper will be limited to heterosexual assaults of women. It is pertinent to define sexual assault as used within this paper. Sexual assault refers to any degree of unwanted sexual contact, whereas rape traditionally refers to penetration. The United States’

Federal Bureau of Investigation's definition of "rape" includes "penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person without the consent of the victim" (Maier, 2014, p. 3). The terms rape and sexual assault will be used interchangeably throughout this paper in accordance with the original texts to maintain the integrity of the survivors' stories.

For this study, two texts will be analyzed through this framework. *SHOUT* (2019) by Laurie Halse Anderson is a poetic memoir that centers on childhood trauma and rape. This text is considered a manifesto for the #MeToo era, an international movement in response to the failure to believe sexual assault victims. This text presents an opportunity to study a piece that both reflects cultural understandings of sexual assault trauma as well as informs them. The second text analyzed within this study is Elissa Washuta's (2014) memoir *My Body is a Book of Rules*. This particular piece presents a more nonlinear timeline and more of an emphasis on the creativity portion of creative nonfiction. These texts both center on sexual assault trauma from the 2010s, and they are both written from female perspectives of heterosexual rape. These two pieces will help to provide a more well-rounded understanding of sexual assault trauma due to their differences in style, publication year, and perspective.

Using Conceptual Metaphor Theory to analyze creative nonfiction accounts of sexual assault allows for more insight into literary trauma theory and the trauma resulting from sex-based crimes. Using a pluralist approach, I am attempting to validate the criminality of sexual assault and the gradual build of inappropriate sexual behavior leading to rape. The aim of this study, using Laurie Halse Anderson's (2019) memoir *SHOUT* and Elissa Washuta's (2014) memoir *My Body is a Book of Rules*, is to analyze the texts for commonalities between their

representations of a specific type of trauma in order to emphasize the criminal status of such offenses through the lack of consent and trauma present during the incidents.

### Chapter Three: *SHOUT* by Laurie Halse Anderson

Laurie Halse Anderson's (1999) first novel *Speak* centers on an adolescent girl who is entering high school. During her freshmen year, she is ostracized by her peers for an incident that she refuses to acknowledge or address. Eventually, she finds her way to the truth of what happened to her: she was raped by an older student during the summer before entering high school. After publishing this novel, Anderson began to receive other survivors' stories, which led her to eventually write her memoir. Her memoir *SHOUT* (2019) is split into two parts. The first part covers her childhood through to the writing of her first young adult novel. The second part covers her life after the novel is published, focusing on its reception from other sexual assault survivors, how her career path has shifted to include advocacy, and the current state of sexual assault crimes in America. While both parts are intriguing and offer insight into the poet's life, the majority of data presented comes from the first part of the memoir. This portion of the text focuses explicitly on how she has conceptualized the crimes committed against her, building from small instances of inappropriate touching to actual rape.

One of the major conceptual metaphors seen during the progression of sexual assaults within the memoir is that of DESIRE IS HUNTING. The experiences with sexual assault range from unwanted touching to rape, escalating as she grows older. The first invocation of DESIRE IS HUNTING is during the first instance of inappropriate sexual behavior within the text. The poet describes a summer scene where several boys are using the pool as a cover for their inappropriate touching. Anderson paints a scene in which young girls are being thrown into shark-infested waters, as young boys attempt to grope and fondle them. She writes, "A shiver of slippery boys/Eleven, twelve years old/With shark-toothed fingers/And gap-toothed smiles/Isolate/The openhearted girls/Eight, nine years old/Tossed in like bloody/Buckets of chum" (Anderson,

2019, p. 24). The comparison between the boys and sharks initiates the conceptual metaphor of A LUSTFUL PERSON IS AN ANIMAL, but after looking further through the passage in its entirety, one is able to see that the appropriate metaphorical concept is that of DESIRE IS HUNTING. “Buckets of chum” are used when fishing, as they are man-made (Anderson, 2019, 24). The comparison to chum, along with the shark references, furthers the notion that the boys are actively hunting.

Anderson (2019) continues her shark-based metaphor as the boys’ behavior escalates. Once the girls jump into the water, there is a sense of frenzied feeding: “The boys circle, then frenzy-feed/Crotch-grabbing, chest-pinching,/Hate-spitting/The water afroth/With glee and destruction” (p. 24) The imagery evoked in “the boys circle, “frenzy-feed,” and “the water afroth” leads the readers to view this behavior as that of an animal (Anderson, 2019, p. 24). In doing so, both parties become dehumanized and relegated to the status of predator and prey. The dehumanization of these characters is important to the scene and the conceptual metaphors because readers can then implant themselves into this scenario and further understand the overarching metaphorical concepts. Through this portion of the memoir, several conceptual metaphors come together, such as DESIRE IS HUNGER, A LUSTFUL PERSON IS AN ANIMAL, and DESIRE IS HUNTING. DESIRE IS HUNGER can be seen in the imagery of sharks feeding, which then coincides with the conceptual metaphor of A LUSTFUL PERSON IS AN ANIMAL. The intentional circling of the boys and the repeated references to chum, and later bait, allow for the conceptual metaphor of DESIRE IS HUNTING to be mapped onto the motivation behind this attack. As mentioned above, this is a common occurrence, and the layering of these conceptual metaphors aids readers in understanding the weight of such a seemingly small offense.

The poet speaks not only to the attack itself, but also to the trauma experienced afterwards. Once the “feeding frenzy” is finished, the girls are left to themselves. Anderson (2019) explains, “Girls stay in the shallows/After their baptism as bait,/That first painful lesson/In how lifeguards/Look the other way” (pp. 24-25). Just moments ago, the boys were grabbing the girls’ crotches and pinching their chests (Anderson, 2019). After the attack, the girls learn their place in the pool and in society. Anderson (2019) evokes the conceptual metaphors mentioned above in an attempt to show that people *escalate* to rape, as these less-violent attacks go unpunished.

Below is a mapping for the overarching conceptual metaphors of DESIRE IS HUNTING and A LUSTFUL PERSON IS AN ANIMAL. It is important to note that all mappings are based on my readings alone and are therefore inherently my own. The mappings appear as such:

Table 1: Mapping: DESIRE IS HUNTING

Source: HUNTING	Target: DESIRE
Using a lure to attract prey (chum/bait)	Using the girls in swimsuits as lures for the boys
Predators – Sharks	Predators – Boys
Prey – Chum/Bait	Prey – Young girls/innocence
Frenzied state – high adrenaline	Frenzied state – high adrenaline
Hunt to fulfill a bodily need (hunger)	Desire to fulfill a bodily need (sex)
Primal hunting rituals (circling prey)	Primal hunting rituals (circling the girls)

Table 2: Mapping: A LUSTFUL PERSON IS AN ANIMAL

Source: AN ANIMAL	Target: A LUSTFUL PERSON
Seeks sex for procreation	Seeks sex for self-satisfaction
Strives to fulfill basic needs for living (hunger)	Strives to fulfill sexual needs
Incapable of thought	Incapable of thinking rationally
Predators - Sharks	Predators - Young men
Prey – “weaker” animals	Prey – “weaker” sex

As Anderson grows older, the assaults against her become more violent and more private. At the age of thirteen, her boyfriend attempts to force her into sexual activity while they are alone. The poet describes this scene as mechanical and cold, again dehumanizing the aggressor and the victim while allowing for a more universal reading. The readers are able to project themselves into the scene due to the lack of names and the impersonal tone. Anderson (2019) writes, “He grabbed me/Once./Pushed me against a/Brick wall, hands greased/With experience/Arms metal cables/Looping around and encasing me” (p. 51). The imagery of machinery adds to the tone by removing the human elements from the attack. The use of “grease,” “metal cables,” “looping...encasing,” emphasizes this robotic nature, but Anderson (2019) does more than portray a survivor’s perspective in this situation. She uses these phrases and this metaphor to signal the overarching metaphor of A LUSTFUL PERSON IS AN ACTIVATED MACHINE. Not only is her partner “turned on,” but his body shifts into that of a machine, with active, moving parts. The force of his action, grabbing her, is then transformed into cables looping around and encasing her. It appears as though the machine metaphor

activates as the assault becomes more imminent. Once the scene becomes more precarious, Anderson (2019) seems to regain her humanity, and she comes back to her senses in the nick of time to save herself. The poet (2019) describes this phenomenon as “I fought, tried to kick/And failed, his mouth dove/For my neck and/I bit him/Until I tasted blood./He backed off, furious/Cried that human bites/Were germ-filled, poisonous./...That boy tasted gasoline dangerous,” (Anderson, p. 51). The distinction of the “human bite” juxtaposes the previous, un-human portrayal of him (Anderson, 2019, p. 51). After the remark about human bites, Anderson (2019) again reinforces the conceptual metaphor of A LUSTFUL PERSON IS AN ACTIVATED MACHINE using the taste of his blood: “gasoline dangerous” (Anderson, 2019, p. 51).

Shortly after this attempted sexual assault, Anderson’s high school boyfriend proceeds to rape her. The couple decides to take a walk down by a local creek and spend some alone time together. In the midst of their flirting, they begin to kiss. This initial kissing presents no issues for Anderson, and she is perfectly content. Yet, this contentment changes rapidly to disgust and fear. The exact shift in her consent is described as, “My mouth met his with delight, I was new/To this kind of kiss and happy to play/By the creek with this boys whose hands then/Wandered fast, too fast, too far/Like a flash flood overwhelming the startled/Banks of a creek that never once thought/Of defense, of damming or the need for a bridge/To escape/His hands, arms shoulders back/Muscle sinew bone” (Anderson, 2019, pp. 53-54). The references to forces of nature, flash floods, in connection with the assault creates a connection to the larger conceptual metaphor of DESIRE IS A FORCE BETWEEN THE DESIRER AND THE DESIRED. While this metaphor does not stipulate the type of force, Anderson (2019) chooses to focus on natural forces that appear to result in disasters – the flash flood -- as a means of conveying the desire mapped onto her by her rapist. She also uses natural forces because they are typically one-



sided: nature acts upon humans. In shifting this metaphor to her natural forces, the readers can better understand the lack of consent and the lack of preparedness for such an assault. The natural forces shift from a flash flood to an avalanche as the violence continues. Anderson (2019) states, “An avalanche of force/The course predetermined one hand on my mouth/His body covering smothering mine/I took my eyes off the rage/In his face and looked up to the green peace/Of leaves fluttering above, trees witnessing” (pp. 53-54). The phrase “an avalanche of force” emphasizes the notion that these forces of nature and desire are mapped onto her. Anderson (2019) then follows her acknowledgement of force with the movement of his hands on her body, which invokes the conceptual metaphor that DESIRE IS A NATURAL FORCE BETWEEN THE DESIRER AND THE DESIRED. This metaphorical concept, like the others used before it, serves to dehumanize both the perpetrator and the survivor in order to convey the invasion of one’s body against their will and to allow readers to align themselves in an easier manner with the feelings of the survivor.

Anderson continues to experience sexual harassment as she becomes a young adult. The conceptual metaphor of DESIRE IS HUNTING is yet again used to convey the poet’s perspective of predatory college professors. She prefaces the harassment with a story about an inappropriate anatomy professor who was obsessed with women’s feet, legs, and butts. She admits that while he never touched a student, they all seemed to leave class feeling “dirty” (Anderson, 2019, p. 137). This story is important because it foreshadows the sexual behavior to come. As Anderson continues her education, the sexual harassment escalates. She initiates her own experiences with the lines, “Young flesh perfumed with trust/Smells like fresh meat/To stalking professors/Dreaming of the feast/It happened to me/Twice” (Anderson, 2019, p. 144). The phrases “flesh,” “fresh meat,” “stalking,” and “feast” all activate the metaphorical concept of

DESIRE IS HUNTING and DESIRE IS HUNGER (Anderson, 2019, p. 144). She reduces the victims to flesh and meat, emphasizing the predatory view of older men. She then adds that the professors are stalking their prey, awaiting their feast. The view presented in these lines is one of men hunting young students, as stalking prey is used when animals or people hunt. These lines may be read as animalistic in nature, triggering the conceptual metaphor of A LUSTFUL PERSON IS AN ANIMAL. The lack of overt animal references and the presence of professors (humans) strengthen the overarching conceptual metaphors of DESIRE IS HUNTING and DESIRE IS HUNGER. Using the initial anecdote and these few lines, Anderson (2019) sets the foundation for several conceptual metaphors of desire and lust, which appear to be one-sided.

As Anderson (2019) continues to describe her experiences, she adds to the metaphorical concepts stated above. She continues on to explain a proposition she received. She declined, and “he chased me around the desk/He blocked the exit/bullying me to at least make out with him/I didn’t” (Anderson, 2019, p. 144). The previous acts of stalking one’s prey inevitably leads to the professor physically chasing his prey, Anderson, in order to finally capture her. The potential sexual assault becomes sexual harassment, as he was not able to successfully finish his hunt. This scene reinforces the conceptual metaphor of DESIRE IS HUNTING. This scenario occurs again, and she writes, “I walked out before the ritual chase around the desk” (Anderson, 2019, p. 145). Describing the chase as a ritual furthers the notion that this is primitive hunting behavior. As she writes about this experience, her writing shifts from first-person to third-person narrative. She begins to describe the professors as “Shielded ivy curtains, tenured lions/Force their prey to sprint from the water hole/In any direction that seems safe/Even if it takes them far afield from their goals” (Anderson, 2019, p. 145). The shift from first-person narrative to third-person also signals another metaphorical concept: A LUSTFUL PERSON IS AN ANIMAL. Anderson (2019)

directly parallels professors, signaled by the word “tenure,” to lions (p. 145). She then adds nature references, such as: “watering hole,” “ivy curtains,” and “far afield” (Anderson, 2019, p. 145). These references serve to reinforce the animal concept at work within the metaphor. As Anderson (2019) further dehumanizes the predatory professors, she switches point of view to remove herself from the text. In removing her first-person pronouns, she is able to open up the experience to her readers as a warning against potential academic assailants. As she provides this cautionary tale, she is able to use the conceptual metaphors present to further aid her readers in understanding the potential dangers that lie on college campuses.

Anderson’s (2019) memoir *SHOUT* layers several metaphorical concepts in conveying her experiences of sexual assault, as it escalates from inappropriate touching to rape and potential assault. She uses these concepts to provide her readers with a deeper understanding of the nonconsensual, and often predatory, nature of sex-based crimes. These crimes are committed at young ages and left unpunished, leading boys to develop a sense of power over women’s bodies as seen in the power dynamics associated with predator/prey hunting and animalistic behavior. These power relationships are reinforced through the conceptual metaphors used within the text: DESIRE IS HUNTING, A LUSTFUL PERSON IS AN ANIMAL, A LUSTFUL PERSON IS AN ACTIVATED MACHINE, DESIRE IS A NATURAL FORCE BETWEEN THE DESIRER AND THE DESIRED, and DESIRE IS HUNGER. These conceptual metaphors enable readers to understand incontrovertibly that Anderson in no way consented to these acts, and they were by definition sexual assaults. In using these conceptual metaphors to convey this information, Anderson is able to express some of the trauma that she endured during these attacks, further emphasizing the lack of consent and validity that what she experienced constituted crimes.

#### **Chapter Four: *My Body is a Book of Rules* by Elissa Washuta**

In contrast to Anderson's (2019) poetic memoir, Elissa Washuta's (2014) memoir *My Body is a Book of Rules* is comprised of different forms of creative nonfiction and a nonlinear timeline. Washuta (2014) uses the genre of creative nonfiction to blend her experiences of sexual assault with society's understanding of such events. She exploits creative nonfiction's ability to "travel through time, to leap without preamble or warning from the narration of particular past events to the immediate and universal present" (McGlynn 2013, p. 113). For those writing about trauma, this quality allows them to write their traumatic experiences in present tense but transition to other memories or times as they need to. Present tense is an important tool in traumatic, creative nonfiction writing as "[its] timelessness, moreover, mirrors the traumatic experience, which often disrupts the orderly progression of chronological time and intrudes, without warning, on the victim" (McGlynn, 2013, p. 115). This is often referred to as an exploded story structure, which Washuta uses in order to convey her experiences with mental illness and sexual assault. Washuta (2014) battles with bipolar disorder and an eating disorder throughout the text. In the midst of this, she also describes the multiple sexual assaults that she has survived and her move from Baltimore to Seattle for graduate school.

Washuta's (2014) piece comprises seventeen chapters and a collection of "Cascade Autobiographies" sprinkled between chapters. Within all of this, the conceptual metaphors of CONTROL IS UP, DESIRE IS HUNGER, A LUSTFUL PERSON IS AN ANIMAL, and RAPE IS WAR blend together to emphasize the effects of sexual assault. The first instance of CONTROL IS UP can be seen several chapters into the text as Washuta (2014) begins to relay the details of her first sexual assault. She states that she was a twenty-year-old virgin, and she was not completely comfortable with the idea of having sex yet. She immediately shifts from this idea of

“taking it slow” to the graphic description of the encounter. She provides no further context as to who her assailant is or how they have found themselves together in this way. She merely begins by highlighting their power dynamic and evoking the conceptual metaphor CONTROL IS UP. She (2014) states, “You stand above me and jack off onto my belly and breasts. You demand...I agree to all these things. I do not agree to what comes after” (Washuta, p. 38). Washuta (2014) immediately positions her assailant as physically above her. This physical location then coincides with the lexical choice of “You *demand*,” which invokes the metaphorical concept of CONTROL IS UP (Washuta, 2014, p. 38). She is positioning her attacker as in control and displaying the power dynamic for her readers. She then admits her lack of consent for the following assault, further positioning herself as within his control. Afterwards, she describes going for the morning-after pill from her university’s clinic and crawling back into bed. She writes, “I play the scene over in my head, as though I could improve upon it in my thoughts. But still, in every remembering, in the middle of the night you are on top of me. Still, every time, I say no, you say yes, and to you, it is nothing but a difference of opinion” (Washuta, 2014, p. 38). She again positions her attacker as physically on top of her, but she also illustrates that despite her pleas, he continues to assault her, showing that he is ultimately in control.

After this passage, Washuta (2014) only speaks to the slow process of realizing that she is now a rape survivor. As she comes to terms with what happened to her, she writes a “Preliminary Bibliography.” This bibliography contains actual citations to media that influenced her young adult life, as well as memories from her childhood. Each entry has an annotation below it with an explanation of why it was included and the impact it had on her. Throughout this bibliography, she creates metaphorical references to her assault. The second bibliography entry signals the conceptual metaphor A LUSTFUL PERSON IS AN ANIMAL. Under the header “JUVENILE

NONFICTION ABOUT SHARKS,” Washuta (2014) writes, “A shark could tear me apart. A shark is bigger than my bed, my bedroom, maybe my one-story house (before the addition)...I saw a [shark] cage in a museum and understood: there is no protection from sharks” (p. 40). The juxtaposition between this bibliography entry and that of the recent description of her sexual assault allows readers to view rapists as sharks. Not only does she speak to the damage that they can cause, but she makes specific reference to her bed and bedroom (Washuta, 2014). In the passage beforehand, her bed was not only the scene of the assault, but it was where she went for refuge directly after, despite it being a trigger for her flashbacks. As she comes to terms with her own assault, she maps dangerous animals (sharks) onto her perceptions of a lustful person, which is then put forth to her readers.

As the bibliography continues, Washuta (2014) returns to the conceptual metaphor of CONTROL IS UP to describe her attack. The metaphor is fleeting, but it reinforces the original use of CONTROL IS UP from the rape scene. A fleeting conceptual metaphor is one in which, “[The] target domain representations may be vague or fleeting compared to source domain representations, and may be more difficult to describe in words or to visualize in mental images” (Cassanto & Bossini, 2014, p. 140). Therefore, fleeting conceptual metaphors are not fully mapped from target domain to source domain and are not fully explained or utilized within the text. Under the bibliography for a diet book, Washuta (2014) states, “My body was slight and perfect when I snared an acceptable boy; it was weak and starved when he pinned me down” (p. 43). Again, the directional dynamic between her and this boy and the force behind “pinned” evoke the conceptual metaphor of CONTROL IS UP.

Below is a mapping for the overarching conceptual metaphor of CONTROL IS UP. As mentioned above, the mapping below is based on my reading alone and is therefore inherently my own. The mapping appears as such:

Table 3: Mapping: CONTROL IS UP

Source: UP	Target: CONTROL
Physically above someone/something	Physical influence on someone/something
Directional	Mental, emotional, and physical
Directionally above	Hierarchically above
Based on gravity	Based on power dynamics between people or Things

Washuta (2014) imitates several generic forms in order to better understand her experiences with sexual assault throughout the text. Most notably, she uses a specific type of creative nonfiction essay in order to understand her experiences. “Hermit crab” essays, as they are called, are ones that use another form as their “shell” (Miller, 2013, p. 104). Washuta (2014) writes a research paper on the term “hooking up,” a preliminary bibliography, and more. The majority of the conceptual metaphors based on Washuta’s (2014) assaults are used in the transcript of a *Law and Order: Special Victims Unit* episode that she created. The text is initially written as a police interview featuring Washuta, a good cop, a psychologist, and a bad cop. As the interview continues, her rapist(s) are featured as the “VILLAIN” (Washuta, 2014, p. 99). The reason that she writes the details of her assault in this form is because it was the only way that she could identify rape within herself. She had to watch a rape-based television series to understand her own assault, and then contextualized her assault within that form. She begins the transcript by providing details of the original assault, referring once again to the conceptual

metaphor of CONTROL IS UP. Washuta (2014) says, “I woke up with his weight on me. He was kind of small but still heavy like a bag of bricks” (p. 98). Given the context of rape, the perpetrator’s position over her exemplifies the power dynamic, reinforcing the original metaphorical concept of CONTROL IS UP. This concept is used almost every time that the original rape is mentioned in order to provide consistency for the readers, as well as Washuta. She continues the metaphor in the next series of responses. She states, “I remember thinking, okay, I could shove him off me. But he throws things, punches things sometimes, and now he’s got me pinned” (Washuta, 2014, p. 99). The idea of shoving him off her again plays with power dynamics and physical placements, as she could gain control by removing her “down” status. Yet, gaining control is not easy, considering that he has her physically pinned down, asserting his control over her body. This depiction of the scene reinforces the continuous, conceptual metaphor of CONTROL IS UP.

After Washuta’s initial rape, she proceeds to graduate from the University of Maryland and enrolls in a graduate program in Seattle, Washington. She views Seattle as a place to start over and a place to become more stable. Despite this newfound stability, Washuta is sexually assaulted once again. Within the transcript portion of her text, she acknowledges that due to her previous rape, she is “seven times more likely to be raped again” (Washuta, 2014, p. 107). The assault occurs after a night of drinking in Seattle. She is supposed to receive a ride home from an acquaintance and instead, they walk to an apartment for him to sober up where he proceeds to sexually assault her. During this portion of the *Law and Order* transcript, the conceptual metaphor usage changes. While Washuta (2014) often uses the conceptual metaphor of CONTROL IS UP when she refers to the original assault, the Villain characters use conceptual metaphors of DESIRE IS HUNTING, DESIRE IS HUNGER, and A LUSTFUL PERSON IS AN



ANIMAL. These can be seen particularly through the second assailant and the second sexual assault.

As Washuta (2014) explains that she did not want to have sex with this man, she intersperses his viewpoint on the assault. His perspective is laden with the above-mentioned metaphorical concepts. She writes, “Lemme ask you something, one hungry man to another: Is there anything better than gorging on a fresh caught meal?” (Washuta, 2014, p. 107). The mention of “hungry man” and “meal” trigger the conceptual metaphor of DESIRE IS HUNGER, but the qualifier, “fresh caught,” redirects the conceptual metaphor to DESIRE IS HUNTING (Washuta, 2014, p. 107). Hunting is historically done to fulfill one’s hunger, and therefore, the hungry man is seen as hunting and catching his prey. This metaphor continues as he states, “The thing was exquisite. It’s like putting an animal down. You have to disassociate. She was beside herself. She yelped like a whipped dog” (Washuta, 2014, p. 107). This quote intertwines two conceptual metaphors. The first of which being the metaphor of DESIRE IS HUNTING, as used above, and paints the animal references as part of the hunting process. Eventually, the prey is caught and “put down.” The additional metaphor present in these lines would be that of CONTROL IS UP. In referencing putting an animal down, which is a reference to killing, there is sense of control involved. There is again a power dynamic between the killer and the victim. Not to mention, the belief that humans are superior to animals. With the directional signal of putting an animal “down” and the power relationships associated with such an act, there is a blended reading of CONTROL IS UP and DESIRE IS HUNTING.

As the description of the night continues, the intensity of the Villain lessens. The conceptual metaphor of GAINING PHYSICAL INTIMACY (AGAINST RESISTANCE) IS A COMPETITION becomes apparent as the Villain discusses the potential for sex between him and

Washuta. He states, “It’s like a game. Will she, won’t she. And if she says no? Plenty of fish in the sea” (Washuta, 2014, p. 109). His reference to sex as a game implies that there is a winner and a loser. These implications trigger the metaphorical concept above, as sex becomes a competition or challenge. At this point, he has penetrated her with his hands, and she has said no to sex. After stating this, he proceeds to perform cunnilingus on her in an attempt to progress towards sex and negate her earlier protests. This furthers the conceptual metaphor of GAINING PHYSICAL INTIMACY (AGAINST RESISTANCE) IS A COMPETITION because his reference to games and sex is directly followed by him attempting to win her over in a sense and physically motivate her to change her mind.

As the second assault portion of the transcript is almost complete, the Villain leaves a few final comments for Washuta. The last comment made by the Villain about this specific assault is almost a subversion of the conceptual metaphor of A LUSTFUL PERSON IS AN ANIMAL. The Villain says, “Hey, tiger: Let’s do this again sometime” (Washuta, 2014, p. 112). By referencing Washuta as “tiger,” the Villain is potentially implying consent. He is invoking the conceptual metaphor with an animal reference and directing that reference at Washuta. It is also important to note that the animal referenced is a known predator, which positions her in a higher status of power than she is actually in during the assault. Washuta (2014) may include this to illustrate the viewpoint of her assailant. She may be implying that her assailant believed that she wanted the sexual encounter that occurred. This can potentially be read as a subversion of a common rape myth. Directly after this line, she provides statistics on sexual assault and reporting assaults, which also reinforces the sense of subversion within the conceptual metaphor above.

After the assault, Washuta (2014) leaves the apartment and calls a cab. As she processes the events of the night, she uses the conceptual metaphor of RAPE IS WAR. Washuta (2014)

writes, “And anyways, wasn’t this inevitable? Hadn’t I always known that the first time unbound me, opened me up for more? I had been waiting for my next pillaging. It was only a matter of time” (p. 111). The way that she describes her body sounds like a city that is vulnerable. She states that she has been opened up for more, which could be said about a weakness in one’s defense. This phrasing coupled with “my next pillaging,” invokes the conceptual metaphor of RAPE IS WAR. She references this effect of war as part of her experience with rape.

After the second sexual assault, she continues the *Law and Order: Special Victims Unit* transcript. The Villain speaks more generally about women’s role in sexual assaults, reinforcing the potential reading of “hey, tiger:” above (Washuta, 2014, p. 112). In doing so, the Villain invokes the fleeting conceptual metaphors of DESIRE IS HUNGER and DESIRE IS HUNTING. He states, “People think sex offenders are different...Drooling fiends lurking in the bushes.” (Washuta, 2014, p. 113). The phrase “drooling fiend” implies a sense of hunger present in the assailants. The term “fiend” also dehumanizes the perpetrators, allowing them to act without remorse in a purely animalistic or monstrous way. This term then triggers the conceptual metaphor of A LUSTFUL PERSON IS AN ANIMAL, as this non-human creature is drooling in lust for his next victim. Considering the sexual nature of the crimes and the object of the “fiend[‘s]” behavior, the conceptual metaphor of DESIRE IS HUNGER becomes apparent. The act of lurking in the bushes, coupled with the feelings of hunger, triggers the conceptual metaphor of DESIRE IS HUNTING. The sex offenders are hunting for their next victim(s), and their desire motivates them to do so.

Washuta’s (2014) memoir *My Body is a Book of Rules* strategically blends metaphorical concepts into a traumatized timeline of events in order to highlight the sexual assaults she endured and how it shaped her life afterwards. In doing so, Washuta (2014) provides a space for

readers to gain a better understanding of sexually based crimes against women. These crimes are committed several times within the text, illustrating the vulnerability of women in a male-dominated society. These power relationships are reinforced through the conceptual metaphors of DESIRE IS HUNTING, A LUSTFUL PERSON IS AN ANIMAL, RAPE IS WAR, DESIRE IS HUNGER, and CONTROL IS UP. These conceptual metaphors play an important role in conveying her lack of consent and her physical experiences of sexual assault.

## Chapter Five: Discussion

Conceptual metaphors combine with creative nonfiction to create a space where survivors can express aspects of their trauma. These conceptual metaphors work in multiple ways to represent the otherwise “unspeakable” trauma experienced by a survivor and situate it within one’s culture. It is through metaphorical comparison that the author’s experiences in life signify in any way upon the reader’s (Walker, 2013). This particular genre affords these experiences a better chance of having an impact on the readers through metaphor. Metaphor allows for a different set of ethics within nonfiction in which “inclusiveness creates a bigger net into which more readers can tumble. Through metaphorical connections readers find entry points and invite themselves right in” (Walker, 2013, p. 203). In essence, metaphor may not always present the most exact truth, but it allows for more people to understand the truth of an experience or a person’s life. Thus, trauma narratives are more likely to align language and experience when using both conceptual metaphors and creative nonfiction.

Creative nonfiction is not all about pouring one’s heart out onto a page. Rather, conveying the experience is not necessarily as important as the piece that is created. When nonfiction writers choose to write in nonlinear forms, as namely Washuta (2014) does, they are emphasizing the fact that they are now “manipulating experience for the sake of art” (Miller, 2013, p. 104). This immediately tells the reader that the writer is not focused on conveying information or revealing secrets, rather they are creating the truth of literature and of metaphor. Using metaphors, specifically conceptual metaphors, allows writers to create a more authentic experience for the reader to then conceptualize the trauma expressed within. For example, Elissa Washuta’s (2014) memoir continually jumps between periods in her life, so that the reader is always immersed in these feelings of unsteadiness and confusion. These feelings mimic not only

her struggle with mental illness, but also her emotional reactions and thinking during and after the sexual assaults that she endured. The unsteadiness that accompanies reading such a text combines with the conceptual metaphors present to create among readers a deeper understanding of rape and its impact on women. It is through the craft of writing that these traumatic experiences can truly be understood.

Before analyzing the use of specific conceptual metaphors in these texts, one must understand the perpetuation of sexual assault within American society. Rape myths, rape scripts, and beliefs about what constitutes a “real” rape influence how victims and non-victims perceive rape. Rape scripts are “stereotypically accepted characteristics of rape, victims, and perpetrators, or reflect a person’s (incorrect) perceptions of what typically occurs during a rape (i. e. a stranger jumping out from behind the bushes)” (Maier, 2014, p. 28). Note that Washuta (2014) has her Villain character speak directly to this notion of a stranger lurking in the bushes while using the conceptual metaphors of DESIRE IS HUNTING, DESIRE IS HUNGER and A LUSTFUL PERSON IS AN ANIMAL. Washuta (2014) flouts this script, as both of her assailants have been acquainted with her before the attacks.

In addition, rape myths often influence rape scripts. Rape myths are most important for their influence on who the public identifies as a “real victim” (Maier, 2014, p. 28). Rape myths typically blame victims for their assault, assert that only certain types of women are raped, and allow perpetrators to escape blame. Typically, real victims are ones that showed physical resilience against a dangerous, often armed, stranger. Unfortunately, rape myths tend to focus on the victim’s “behavior, responsibility, and character” (Maier, 2014, p. 29). Real victims are not allowed to be under any influence, whether it be drugs or alcohol. Washuta (2014) is under the influence during her second assault, which according to these myths would have negative

repercussions on her credibility and the validity of her statement. Real victims also should not be wearing any type of provocative clothing, as this can imply consent according to rape culture. Arguably, Anderson's (2019) bathing suit could have been misconstrued as provocative, thus the boys were left with no choice but to attack her in the pool. While these myths are not actually representative of real victims, these attributes can discredit a rape victim in the eyes of society.

Not only is the general public influenced by rape myths and scripts, but survivors are as well. These can influence whether a victim deems their assault to be a "real" rape. In fact, some women refuse to acknowledge that a rape has occurred, rather there was a "miscommunication," or the assault is left unclassified (Maier, 2014). While the myths and scripts are not the only reason that women refute the classification of rape, they do play a major role in allowing sexually inappropriate behavior to continue. These perceptions of rape do not account for the minor assaults that can lead up to rape, nor do they assign blame to the perpetrators that do not fit these parameters (Maier, 2014).

The ability to conceptualize traumatic experiences through language helps to dispel the rape myths and scripts that surround sexual assault. As mentioned above, creative nonfiction lends itself to the use of conceptual metaphors in order to illustrate one's experiences. Due to this relationship between creative nonfiction and metaphorical concepts, trauma experiences are able to be expressed through language and understood by readers. Sabine Sielke (2002) describes the impact that these trauma experiences can have on society, as well as the impact of society on rape narratives. She (2002) states, "[Rape narratives] are first and foremost interpretations, readings of rape that, as they seem to make sense of socially deviant behavior, oftentimes limit our understanding of sexual violence while producing social norms of sexuality in the process" (pp. 2-3). The texts are both a product of and a producer of the rape myths and scripts that

circulate society. Some aspects of this deviant behavior are exposed, as they combat the misconceptions of real rapes and real victims. It is important to understand that these texts are written within the context of these rape myths and scripts. The writers' conceptualizations of what happened to them is shaped by the culture that they live and write in, thereby making escaping all aspects of rape culture almost impossible.

While some of the metaphorical concepts do not cross over between experiences, the ones that do are important in understanding American conceptualizations of sexual assault trauma. Both authors use conceptual metaphors centered on desire and animalistic behavior. The conceptual metaphors of DESIRE IS HUNTING, A LUSTFUL PERSON IS AN ANIMAL, and DESIRE IS HUNGER serve to dehumanize both parties and convey very primitive behavior, such as stalking/lurking, circling prey, drooling, etc. By triggering these conceptual metaphors, both authors illustrate the dehumanizing impact on the victim, as they are relegated to the status of an object to be devoured rather than a human being. The use of these conceptual metaphors also works to dehumanize the assailants, removing the possibility of any sense of morals and remorse they may have through the source domains of MACHINE and ANIMAL. This dehumanization speaks to the rape myth that sex offenders are either mentally ill or unable to control their sexual urge (Maier, 2014). By dehumanizing them, perpetrators are made irrational and incapable of understanding the impact of their actions.

The aforementioned conceptual metaphors combine to provide the author's perspective of sexual assault trauma. On one hand, Anderson's (2019) use of these metaphorical concepts becomes apparent through her retellings of the incidents and her depiction of the assailants. She uses sharks and bait to express the inappropriate view of desire and sexuality in young children. This view reinforces the notion that committing unwanted sexual acts on someone is socially



acceptable, as no one attempts to stop it. The sexual behavior then manifests into different conceptual metaphors and different types of assault. On the other hand, Washuta's (2014) use of these metaphorical concepts only appears through the perpetrator's dialogue in her transcripts. Washuta (2014) purposefully writes these metaphors into the assailants' viewpoint, as the metaphorical concepts speak to the feeling of dominance and control over a woman. The Villain character seems to speak for all sexual offenders, as he attempts to explain himself to the audience. While doing so, he shows no remorse for his actions, which once again illustrates the rape myth that rapists are either mentally ill or incapable of controlling themselves. This character and these conceptual metaphors almost seem to embody common rape myths within society. For instance, Washuta's assaulter references his joy over a fresh kill, insinuates that she may consent through his view of rape as a competition or game, and explains how the stereotypical sex offender lurks in the bushes. Washuta's text in particular seems to contradict some of these rape myths in that the Villain characters were never strangers to her despite the belief that only strangers commit sexual assaults. In addition, Anderson's (2019) sexual assaults were also committed by young men that she knew. The conceptual metaphors shared between the two memoirs also emphasize the power dynamics at work between the perpetrator(s) and the survivors. Positioning the two parties as predators and prey respectively creates a hierarchy of power in which the predators are above their "weaker" counterparts while also underscoring the violence that undergirds rape.

The conceptual metaphors that are not shared between authors display similar notions of power and desire. For instance, Washuta (2014) uses the conceptual metaphor of CONTROL IS UP to describe her assaults, which also describes the feeling of helplessness or lack of control on her part. Interestingly, this is one of the only conceptual metaphors used by Washuta in a first-

person perspective to convey her assaults. She continues the conceptual metaphor from the first mention of an assault through to the explanation of both assaults. While other conceptual metaphors become apparent, this one in particular seems to aid Washuta the most in processing and conveying her own trauma. The conceptual metaphor of CONTROL IS UP is an orientational metaphor, meaning that it is mapped based on spatial orientation rather than simply one concept to another. Orientational metaphors rely on bodily experiences more so than other types of conceptual metaphors, as abstract concepts are mapped on the reader's conceptions of how a body moves through the space around them (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, 2003). The use of such a metaphor in describing a very physical attack, such as rape, makes sense. Washuta (2014) is able to map her physical position below her assailant onto the control, both physically and emotionally, that he has over her. This is then what she relays to her readers in order for them to understand her experience of trauma. Speaking to Brenda Miller's (2013) point that conveying experiences is not always the most effective way to create the truth of a text, Washuta (2014) does not simply write that he was above her. She uses the conceptual metaphor to allow readers to understand that she could not fight back or struggle out of his grasp for numerous reasons, but the major one is that he had control over her. This metaphor then contradicts the rape myth that victims who do not struggle gave consent to such acts (Maier, 2014, p. 30). Another major reason that Washuta (2014) might imply this sense of control, and did not actively fight back, is that her assailants were never complete strangers. In fact, the man that raped her was someone who she was previously intimate with. These prior relationships, no matter the depth of them, reinforced the control that these men had over her during these assaults, which is shown through the conceptual metaphors that she favors: CONTROL IS UP.

Washuta (2014) also uses one other conceptual metaphor to explain her perception of the attacks: RAPE IS WAR. This is a conceptual metaphor that is most often used in a first-person perspective for a perpetrator or a third-person narration of an assault. For instance, Tarquin is often associated with this conceptual metaphor for his rape of Lucrece in the famous trope (Koketso, 2015, p. 153). This conceptual metaphor is rarely used by a victim to explain their attack in such a way as being vulnerable to more attacks. It is possible that Washuta (2014) uses this metaphor in order to not only express the trauma and anxiety that she has faced after her assaults, but also to further grab her reader's attention by twisting the typical usage of this conceptual metaphor. In a sense, she is enacting her creative ability within the genre to manipulate conceptual metaphors to her expressive needs. It is also important to note that this is one of the only structural metaphors that she uses a truly first-person perspective with. All other structural conceptual metaphors are used by the Villain character. This may speak to the fact that she cannot physically place herself within the Villain's position like she can for the orientational metaphor that she consistently uses. She must use structural metaphors in order to conceptualize this perspective, as her readers or others outside of this experience might.

Anderson (2019) also implies control and power when she uses the conceptual metaphor DESIRE IS A NATURAL FORCE BETWEEN THE DESIRER AND THE DESIRED. The qualifier of a "natural" force implies a one-sided relationship, where force is exerted by the desirer onto the desired. In her examples, Anderson (2019) uses natural disasters as the natural forces acting against her, like an avalanche, a flash flood, etc. She uses this conceptual metaphor to demonstrate her lack of power and consent during the assault. This helps her to portray herself as a real rape victim despite her seemingly complicit behavior. Her previous examples also help to portray her as a victim. Anderson's age during the initial scene of inappropriate sexual behavior

helps to contradict the potentially provocative nature of her bathing suit. At such a young age, Anderson (2019) is hardly trying to attract boys, although some might argue otherwise. Additionally, she shows that by not punishing the boys for this behavior, they grow to become even more sexually violent towards women, as evidenced by the escalation in the attacks against her by various men. This notion directly speaks to rape myths and their lack of accountability for perpetrators. If rape myths persist, then so shall sexual violence and escalations to rape. At the time of her rape, Anderson (2019) is with a young man that she presumably trusts, as they have been affectionate prior to this. It may be harder for some readers to understand that she did not consent to this level of intimacy with this young man due to their prior relationship. The conceptual metaphors aid readers in understanding her traumatic experiences, as well as allowing readers to conceptualize what a lack of consent can look and feel like.

The perspective of one's lack of consent is also shared during Anderson's (2019) first experience of sexual assault. For this experience, she uses the conceptual metaphor of A LUSTFUL PERSON IS AN ACTIVATED MACHINE. This conceptual metaphor dehumanizes her attacker, as well as illustrates the power dynamic between the two. He seemed mechanical and cold, allowing readers to understand that this was not a deeply loving or intimate moment. This metaphorical concept also allows readers to understand why Anderson does not immediately fight back against him. He is conveyed as inhuman and almost invulnerable. Her notion that his arms wrapped tightly around her like cords reinforces the belief that she could not easily escape him. Once she processes what these actions are leading towards, she does fight back. The conceptual metaphors are what seem to contrast the notion that every victim must fight back in order to be taken seriously in the eyes of society, as they continue to reiterate the same notions of overwhelming power and desire.

Anderson's (2019) text tends to tread very carefully between dispelling rape myths and reinforcing them, speaking directly to Sielke's (2002) argument. Anderson (2019) attempts to authentically replicate the trauma that she endured while demonstrating her lack of consent. In doing so, she uses conceptual metaphors, mainly structural conceptual metaphors, to emphasize her powerlessness. Throughout her piece, she maintains a primarily linear timeline so that the readers can understand the escalation of sexual assault within her life and the consequential normalization of it. As authority figures failed to chastise the young boys after her first encounter with forceful sexual behavior, Anderson (2019) learns that these actions are not problematic. This may also explain why Anderson (2019) does not fight back against the next attack until it is almost too late. She has learned that a lack of consent seems to mean nothing to the world around her. Her piece focuses on blending these experiences into her childhood as if they were equal to falling off a bike and breaking her arm or having her first heartbreak. These events almost seem as if they are a rite of passage for young women in society, and the conceptual metaphors are some of the only indications that she struggled or endured trauma as a result of these events.

Washuta (2014), on the other hand, seems to blur her timeline so much so that it is hard to tell when she was actually attacked and by whom. The first example that I provided is one of the first times that she mentions the assault, yet she provides little to no context. It is almost as if Washuta (2014) only wants the reader to focus on the actions and their direct effects on her. She wants her readers to clearly understand that she did not consent and that this assault was truly that: an assault on her body and mind. Out of seventeen chapters, it takes Washuta (2014) ten chapters to finally provide concrete details of her assaults. The chapters prior to this all seem to skirt around the actual assaults. This may relate to literary trauma theory's belief that trauma is not able to be communicated through written and spoken language. It could be that Washuta was

unable to convey her experiences through a more traditional essay format, and it was not until she used another rape-affiliated format that she could properly write about her assaults—thus her use of the “hermit-crab” essay. If this is true, then it proves that while trauma is inherent to one’s experiences with it, there are common forms for survivors to use to effectively process and express their experiences. Through her transcript, the reader is finally able to fully understand the extent of her attacks and her lack of consent and power within these situations. This understanding is aided by the conceptual metaphors included within this format.

While the findings above support the claim that creative nonfiction blends with conceptual metaphor theory to provide access to trauma experiences, the fact that this is a qualitative study that looks closely at only two texts, must be taken into consideration. Additionally, these texts are written by two different women from different backgrounds. Laurie Halse Anderson is currently fifty-eight years old, and she was fifty-seven years old when her memoir was published. It has been almost forty years since her rape occurred. She is a Caucasian woman from Potsdam, New York, and she currently resides in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Elissa Washuta is a member of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe, and she is currently thirty-six years old. She was thirty-years old at the time of her memoir’s publication, and as of then, it had been a decade since her first sexual assault. These texts also focus on only assaults that involved heterosexual, male-initiated sexual violence. Sexual violence can occur against anyone by anyone, as it does not discriminate against gender, orientation, race, or creed. Another point of consideration would be that the texts focus specifically on American culture and American views of sexual assault. Other cultures may have different concepts of rape and sexual assault that could affect their conceptual metaphors and their societal views of rape. In spite of these considerations, there is evidence to prove that trauma resulting from sexual assault or rape is able to be expressed

through conceptual metaphors and creative nonfiction. Not only are these experiences accessible to readers, but there are some commonalities between the metaphorical concepts used within the texts and the overall readings of the conceptual metaphors. These readings work to dispel some of America's misconceptions of sexual assault crimes, such as common rape myths about victims and stranger-rape.

Returning to literary trauma theory's argument that trauma is unspeakable, sexual assaults' often witness-less nature may make it an even more difficult type of trauma to express through language. Originally, the trope of the "unspeakable" was associated with romantic love and the sacred or sublime, which makes its use in this particular type of trauma troublesome (Stampfl, 2014). While it is now used to describe the lack of representation for a traumatic event, the initial use of the device can allow for a conflating of romantic love and nonconsensual sexual activity when reading sexual-violence-based narratives. This potential conflation works against the trauma narratives that seek to clear up any confusion or misconceptions about rape within American society. While trauma can be difficult to express for the survivor, the readings that emerge from these texts illustrate the survivor's lack of consent and feelings of objectification, sexualization, and powerlessness during these attacks. To claim that such trauma is unrepresentable negates these readings and renders the authors as merely victims. Through conceptual metaphor and the genre of creative nonfiction, these survivors are given a chance to both express and process their experiences, while allowing others to see them as real victims of real rapes.

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